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First Committee

13th Meeting
Monday, 6 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Erdenechuluun . . . . . (Mongolia)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the late Prime Minister of the State of Israel

The Chairman: It was with shock and great sadness that members of the First Committee learned of the assassination of His Excellency Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the late Prime Minister of Israel. I am sure that I am expressing the sentiments of everyone here when I say that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will be remembered for the distinguished leadership he gave to his country and as a staunch fighter for peace and security in the Middle East.

I wish on behalf of the members of the First Committee to extend our heartfelt condolences to the delegation of Israel upon the tragic and untimely demise of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and to request the Israeli delegation to convey our sentiments to the Government and the people of Israel and to the bereaved family.

I ask members of the Committee to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The members of the First Committee observed a minute of silence.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of South Africa, Mr. Frederick Bergh, who will speak on behalf of the African States.

Mr. Bergh (South Africa): The member States of the African Group have learned with deep shock and sadness of the assassination of Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, this past weekend. This criminal act, which should be condemned in the strongest terms, must surely have been committed by someone who has no interest in the genuine welfare of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The death of Mr. Rabin is a great loss to the people of Israel and could threaten the peace process now under way in the Middle East.

The African Group urges all the parties to the Middle East peace process not to be deterred by this tragic incident but to draw strength from the firm belief that the legacy of Mr. Rabin's leadership would best be honoured by following the course set by him.

Member States of the African Group convey their condolences to the Rabin family and to the people and Government of Israel.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Brunei Darussalam, Mr. Haji Jemat, who will speak on behalf of the Asian States.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of the Asian Group I have the honour to join my colleagues in expressing our most profound sympathy and condolences to the family of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and to the people of Israel. Israel has lost an outstanding leader and a man of peace. It is sad to witness once again a man and a leader of such courage becoming a victim of the violence that we have seen for so long in the Middle East.

I am sure that I am expressing the feelings of members of the Asian Group when I say that the sacrifice

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of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will not have been in vain. His untimely death should be a reminder to all concerned of the urgency of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace in the troubled region.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Poland, Ambassador Dembiński, who will speak on behalf of Eastern European States.

Mr. Dembiński (Poland): On behalf of the Eastern European Group I should like to express our profound shock, sadness and grief at the murder of the great Israeli statesman and leader, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He leaves an indelible mark on the international scene. His contribution to the peace process in the Middle East is immeasurable. I should like to ask the delegation of Israel to convey our sentiments and sincere condolences to the Government and people of Israel and the family of the deceased.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Bolivia, Mr. Gualberto Rodríguez, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Rodríguez (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, to express our sincere condolences at the tragic death of the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. The assassination of this outstanding leader deprives the international community of a leader who was dedicated to the cause of world peace. The circumstances of his death reveal, moreover, the intolerance and intransigence of groups of radicals opposed to building a society in Gaza based on the ideals of solidarity and understanding.

This crime has shaken the entire world — Governments, political analysts, the press and the man in the street — because Prime Minister Rabin was the incarnation of the search for paths towards reconciliation and bringing peoples closer together. He sought courageous and new solutions for peace in the Middle East.

The pain caused by the passing of Prime Minister Rabin commits the political will of the entire world to the process of fundamental transformation initiated by Mr. Rabin so as to achieve peace at last in the region and in the world. May God keep this outstanding statesman in His care and let us have greater understanding among men.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Norway, Ambassador Hans Jacob Bjørn Lian, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and Other States.

Mr. Bjørn Lian (Norway): Members of the Group of Western European and Other States were deeply shocked and profoundly saddened at the news of the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. We all condemn this despicable act of violence. Israel and the world have lost a great statesman and a visionary leader. Prime Minister Rabin showed great personal courage and determination in his search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. He was the main architect of the peace process, which he again praised and promoted on the last day of his life, minutes before he was killed.

We all remember that only a year ago Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize. He received that prize for his considerable efforts and for the considerable courage he showed in bringing the peace process forward. Now, on the day of the burial of Prime Minister Rabin, we all feel the necessity of continuing his work towards peace. That is his legacy and that is our responsibility.

On this day our thoughts and sympathy go to his family, to the people of Israel and to all those who had faith in Yitzhak Rabin's mission.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Israel, Ambassador Yativ, to make a statement.

Mr. Yativ (Israel): November 4, 1995 is a day that will live in the memory of Israel, its neighbours and the international community for ever: on that day an assassin's bullet killed the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin.

The bullet was not meant for the man himself. The bullet was an attempt to stop the courageous march towards peace for all peoples of the Middle East. In the words of Yitzhak Rabin himself in his last speech at the peace rally in Tel Aviv:

> "I was a military man for 27 years. I fought so long as there was no chance for peace. I believe that there is now a chance for peace."

The Government of Israel is fully committed to continue its efforts to reach a comprehensive and lasting peace with all of its neighbours. It is our obligation — the obligation of us in the Middle East and of the international

community — to make sure that Prime Minister Rabin's vision will not be lost. An assassin's bullet will not halt our efforts to achieve what Prime Minister Rabin had so boldly set out to accomplish.

In Prime Minister Rabin's speech to the General Assembly on 24 October 1995 he said:

> "The road is still long. However, we are determined to continue until we have brought peace to the region, for our children and our children's children and for all the peoples of the region. This is our mission. We will fulfil it." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 39th meeting, p. 26*)

Let these words inspire us in our journey towards peace.

Agenda items 57 to 81 (*continued*)

Consideration of draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: In accordance with the Committee's programme of work and timetable, this morning the Committee will proceed to the next phase of its work, namely, the consideration of draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 57 to 81.

In this connection I should like to point out that today's meetings, as well as those scheduled for Tuesday, 7 November, and Wednesday, 8 November, are to be devoted to the introduction of draft resolutions and to comments on them.

The Committee will now begin its consideration of draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items.

I call first on the representative of the United States who will introduce the draft resolution on the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines (A/C.1/50/L.45).

Mr. Inderfurth (United States of America): May I begin by saying that Ambassador Albright had intended to be here this morning to deliver the statement of the United States introducing the draft resolution on anti-personnel land-mines (A/C.1/50/L.45). However, because of the tragic events of this weekend she is not here. She is in Jerusalem with President Clinton and leaders from around the world attending the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister and peacemaker. We grieve at his loss and express our greatest sympathies to the family and the people of Israel. It is a very sad day for all of us.

I am pleased to have this opportunity today to introduce this important draft resolution calling for States to adopt moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. These hidden killers inflict indiscriminate horror on civilians. In Cambodia, for example, it is impossible to walk down a street in Phnom Penh without seeing a child using a makeshift crutch or wagon to get from place to place.

Anti-personnel land-mines have become the coward's weapon of choice. They are simple to lay but difficult to destroy or detect. More and more they are used not to limit the movements of an opposing army but as weapons of terror and economic war. They are weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. Long after the conflict is over these weapons often continue to kill and maim, wreaking havoc for years to come.

As is known, draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.45, which I am introducing today, is one of high priority for my Government because it represents an important element in the overall effort to address and ultimately put an end to the pain and suffering caused by anti-personnel land-mines.

Over the past few years the United States, in partnership with many other Governments, has been engaged in a continuous, multifaceted approach to the problems caused by land-mines. In July we worked closely with the United Nations to hold the unprecedented International Meeting on Mine Clearance in Geneva, which was attended by representatives from more than 90 countries. The United States delegation to that meeting was led by former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

Discussions were held on global de-mining needs and operational priorities, funds were raised at the meeting for ongoing United Nations de-mining operations, and I am pleased to tell the Committee that the United States pledged $12.5 million. Yet our involvement in Geneva only complemented our continuous support for de-mining assistance programmes in Asia, Africa and Central America. In fact, in the last year we have spent about $46 million for global de-mining assistance.

In March the United States deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on conventional weapons,

thus ensuring that we would be a full party at the September Review Conference in Vienna. Much to our regret, however, delegations to the Conference could not achieve consensus on key issues relating to the strengthening of the restrictions in the land-mines Protocol and so the Conference was recessed. None the less, progress was made and we are confident that the necessary consensus will be achieved when the Conference reconvenes in January.

In support of this objective, the United States has already agreed to co-sponsor the draft resolution on the Convention on conventional weapons, which will be introduced by Sweden.

The United States, together with the United Kingdom, has also developed a proposal for an anti-personnel land-mine control programme. As a first step the control programme would impose restrictions on the production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel land-mines. We plan to pursue this control programme to complement and reinforce the Convention on conventional weapons and we look forward ultimately to broad participation in the programme.

In addition to these efforts, the United States, together with more than 25 other States, has adopted moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. The United States first adopted an export moratorium in 1992, with Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont taking a leadership role, a role he continues to exert in dealing with the world-wide land-mine crisis.

As can be seen, we have tried in earnest to address the humanitarian tragedy caused by anti-personnel land-mines, and in many ways we have been quite successful, but much more needs to be done. It is for this reason that we are again introducing this draft resolution in the First Committee. Building on the momentum of the past two years the draft resolution calls on Governments to adopt moratoriums on the transfer of anti-personnel land-mines and to take concrete steps leading to the eventual elimination of such weapons, a goal first proposed by President Clinton in his statement to the General Assembly last year, and reaffirmed by the President a few short weeks ago.

According to the draft resolution, the General Assembly would call attention to the various international efforts undertaken to confront the scourge of land-mines. In this respect it would highlight the importance of the Convention on conventional weapons as the authoritative international instrument governing the use of anti-personnel land-mines and urge all States to comply with its applicable rules.

Finally, the text underscores the horrible toll taken on civilian populations as a result of anti-personnel land-mines. It notes that according to the Secretary-General there are an estimated 110 million land-mines in the ground in more than 60 countries. It further notes that between 2 million and 5 million new land-mines are laid each year, but that only about 100,000 were cleared in 1994. As these statistics make painfully clear, the global land-mine problem continues to worsen at an alarming rate.

My delegation met last week with representatives from States where the land-mine crisis has ruined lives and torn countries apart. From them the message was clear: action is needed now. While this draft resolution is far from being a cure-all, it is an important and necessary step in the right direction.

We must continue to work towards a world free from the human tragedy caused by anti-personnel land-mines. We must renew our commitment to clear, control and eventually eliminate these indiscriminate killers and we must act on this commitment now, today. Thus I urge my colleagues in the international community not only to support this draft resolution but also to co-sponsor it. At present we have more than 80 co-sponsors of the land-mine draft resolution. Please join us today as our numbers grow, thus showing further international support and momentum for dealing with this world-wide humanitarian crisis.

Organization of work

The Chairman: I do not have any other delegation listed as wishing to speak at this stage. Does any other delegation wish to introduce draft resolutions or make statements on them? There seem to be none.

As representatives may recall, the Committee at its sixth informal meeting, held on Thursday, 2 November, informally decided to extend the deadline for submission of draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items from Friday, 3 November, to today, Monday, 6 November, at 12 noon.

After having consultations with interested delegations, the Chair, at the request of certain delegations, wishes to state that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions could be postponed until 4 p.m. today. Would this 4 p.m. deadline meet with the approval of all delegations? The

deadline concerns all the draft resolutions that have not yet been submitted.

Mr. Akalovsky (United States of America): We heard from the Secretary of the Committee last week that further postponement of the deadline would create difficulties in terms of the reproduction and translation of the draft resolutions, given the constraints under which the Secretariat is operating nowadays. Therefore, my delegation would not be in favour of extending the deadline further.

Our impression last week was that we had a decision rather than an informal decision, but obviously from what you, Sir, have just said, we were wrong. It seems to us that we are all aware of the deadline to which we are supposed to work, and our hope is that whatever decisions we make here will stick rather than be changed every few hours as it were. If the deadline is extended to 4 p.m. I wonder whether somebody will not come and say it should be extended to 6 p.m., to tomorrow, and so forth. It seems to us, therefore, that the best thing to do would be to stick with the decision we took on Thursday.

The Chairman: I cannot agree more with what the representative of the United States has just said. However, the reality of the situation is a little different.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): My delegation appreciates the steps taken by you, Sir, to extend the deadline to 12 noon and then the decision just announced by you to extend that deadline further to 4 p.m. It may be that my delegation will be in a position to submit its last draft resolution by 4 p.m., but if we are unable to do so I should like to know whether it would be possible to extend the deadline to 6 p.m. for the submission of one draft resolution on the subject of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The Chairman: Are there any further comments?

Mr. Rodríguez (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In truth, all delegations share the concern that we should not extend the deadlines indefinitely. Unfortunately, however, in view of the special circumstance that for practically a week, our delegations were busy with the participation of Heads of State in the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, for many delegations the time has been so short that as a result we are now asking for an extension of the deadlines.

We would therefore request the Chairman and the Secretary to take these special circumstances into account and grant this slight extension of the deadline to 4 p.m.

As regards the extension requested by the representative of Sri Lanka, we would like to see some flexibility on that particular point. We fully understand the difficulties this causes for the Secretariat; however these are extremely important matters that have prompted us to request the greatest flexibility possible. We know that the Chairman and the Secretariat have been flexible and we would like to congratulate them and thank them for enabling all delegations to have the opportunity to submit their draft resolutions today.

The Chairman: If there are no further comments I should like to say at this point that I have been informed by the Secretariat that because of the delay and postponement of the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions the Committee might also have to postpone the action on draft resolutions.

According to our programme of work the Committee is supposed to begin action on draft resolutions on the morning of 9 November. It seems that if the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions is extended, we may have to move the beginning of the action on draft resolutions from Thursday to Friday afternoon. The Committee will be well aware that the Secretariat constraints will make it very difficult for delegations to receive the draft resolutions in good time to consider them before beginning to take action. I therefore appeal to all delegations to try to keep to the deadline of 4 p.m. today.

Mr. Akalovsky (United States of America): My delegation appreciates the difficulties that some delegations may have with the draft resolutions. My delegation is one of them. Nevertheless, we have tried to work under the deadline we agreed upon on Thursday and now I hear requests for flexibility.

I do not know what that means, really. We have heard a request for an extension until 6 p.m. As I said, somebody may come and request a delay until tomorrow, and so forth. So if we do reach an agreement today on a deadline, it should be a firm one. If there is flexibility, again there should be flexibility for everyone, but that flexibility should be defined as the time of the deadline: that is the flexibility we are given by any extension we may agree upon.

The Chairman: Certainly, I take note of the argument behind the statement of the representative of the United States, which I fully share.

With the understanding that the extension of the deadline to 6 p.m. may necessitate the postponement of the beginning of the action part on draft resolutions from Thursday to Friday afternoon, I should like to ask the Committee's approval —

I call on the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Akalovsky (United States of America): I did not mean to interrupt you, Sir, but I have a question in connection with your question as to whether the postponement of action would be agreeable to everyone.

My question is: Would that entail any prolongation of the session *per se*?

The Chairman: It may not, but I am not sure about that. We have set Monday, 20 November, for the end of the work of the First Committee. Certainly, the Bureau will try to stick to that date. In fact, I am thinking about the possibility of finishing all the disarmament items on Friday, 17 November. But of course, the postponement for the submission of draft resolutions may create difficulties for us in finishing our work on the dates we have agreed upon.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Kheradi (Secretary of the Committee): I merely wish to amplify a little what the Chairman has just stated concerning the feelings of the Secretariat regarding this matter. My statement of Friday is, of course, on record and certainly, as we have always done in the past, we will do our utmost to ensure the requisite flexibility in whatever ways are possible.

However, the reason that I informed the Committee that a postponement of the action part may be necessary, it will be recalled, is that we also have the exercise of clustering the draft resolutions. Until we have received all of the draft resolutions and until they have been officially issued, it will be difficult to cluster them. The procedure, of course, involves going back to the Bureau, its perusing the entire situation and going back for any regional consultations or other consultations that may be necessary before a final decision is taken on the clustering device, which would then be distributed to the members of the First Committee.

Thus, taking all these matters and all the difficulties involved into account, it would appear, as I said, that further postponement would perhaps entail moving the beginning of the action part to Friday. Everything possible will of course be done, as you stated, Sir, to finish the work on all items by 20 November, as now scheduled, with a very solid attempt being made to finish disarmament items by 17 November, keeping in mind that one cannot guarantee that.

Mr. Akalovsky (United States of America): I am sorry to have to prolong this discussion, but the explanations just given to us by the Secretary and by you earlier, Sir, again raise doubts in my delegation about the wisdom of postponing our deadlines. Again, at least as far as my delegation is concerned — but I know this is true of some other delegations as well — we have been proceeding on the assumption that we would complete our work on 20 November. Now there is some doubt about that too, as I understand the explanation just given.

So I wonder if we should not really try to compress our work today in terms of the submission of draft resolutions until 4 p.m. at least, as you proposed earlier, Sir, to reduce the possibility of an extension of the session. Many members of delegations, I am sure, have made travel plans and other commitments elsewhere after 20 November and we might find it very difficult to work after that date. I would therefore suggest that we look at the situation more carefully and not jump to any premature or hasty decisions in terms of deadlines for draft resolutions.

Mr. Goonetilleke (Sri Lanka): I have listened with great attention to the discussion that is going on. Perhaps we can settle the issue as follows.

If there are any particular delegations having a draft resolution or two to submit, perhaps they could be afforded the opportunity to submit them by 6 p.m. today. The alternative would be for those delegations to submit their draft resolutions by 4 p.m., as suggested by you, Mr. Chairman, with the possibility of amending those draft resolutions that will involve the issuance of any number of revisions.

My proposal to push the deadline to 6 p.m. was merely to avoid issuing revisions to the draft resolutions that we may have to submit.

The Chairman: While I am of course aware that everything should be done to avoid too many revisions to

draft resolutions, the action suggested would also certainly gain time.

With that in mind, I ask the Committee's approval to extend the deadline to 6 p.m. today. If there is no objection, it is so decided.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The deadline is now 6 p.m. and we are not going beyond that. May I remind all delegations that the draft resolutions should be submitted to the Secretary's office. This morning, of course, the Secretary and the Secretariat staff are here and they are most willing to receive the draft resolutions.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.